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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Saturday, October 13, 1934.

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Subject: "Weather Changes." Information from the Weather Bureau, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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You can start an argument in almost any company by bringing up one question about the weather. Just inquire whether our climate is changing and you'll be answered with plenty of opinions, pro and con.

Granddad will hold that the climate has changed a good deal since he was a boy. He'll tell you that winters are warmer nowadays and have less snow, that the fall season stretches out longer and that we have worse drouths than we used to have. Most people of our northern States who are seventy or thereabouts will recall childhood days when their homes were snowed in at Hallowe'en, or when the deepest river in the locality was frozen from bank to bank early in the season.

But the younger people may come back with the argument that winter, like everything else in the world, is exaggerated in the eyes of a child, and that Granddad is probably remembering the weather not as it really was but as it seemed to a small boy. Also they'll suggest that our modern steam heat and other comforts make winters seem less severe. This side of the argument will hold that, taken by and large, the weather probably changes very little.

Well, weather is a mystery to most of us. It rains and blows and blisters and freezes, and all we do about it is talk, as Mark Twain said. But when we have such unusual weather as this year's drouth, or the great number of tropical hurricanes of last year, we begin to wonder if Granddad isn't right. The only way to find out for sure whether our climate is really changing is to go to the records of the United States Weather Bureau.

Experts at the Weather Bureau will tell you that this year's northwestern drouth is the result of less than normal rainfall in that section over a period of years. You can see by the records that the general rainfall trend in that part of the country has been downward for a quarter of a century, finally culminating in this year's drouth. Every one of the past five years up to 1934 has less than normal rainfall, and the rainfall for the first half of this year was the lowest on record in most northwestern states.

The drouth this past summer was unusual in several ways. It came unusually early. And it covered an unusually large area. In fact, no other drouth on record extended over so much territory -- from the Canadian border on the north to the Appalachian Mountains on the east; Tennessee, northern Arkansas and Texas on the south; and the Great Basin on the west.

But the weather specialists say that this doesn't prove that this drouth/area is in for a permanent change to a desert-like climate. Not at all. The records show that this year's drouth is what we may naturally expect in that section only over a wide period every thirty or forty years. Similar conditions are on record for a series of years about 1864 and again in 1894. We didn't hear so much about those "dry waves" because the radio, the automobile, the press and the airplane weren't spreading news so fast. And we weren't bothered with dust clouds in those dry periods as we were this year, because most of the land was then in natural sod instead of plowed up as it has been in recent years. About midway between those thirty and forty-year drouths, the records show a number of successive years with abundant rainfall. The weather experts say that we have no reason to believe that history won't repeat itself.

Rainfall fluctuates a great deal more than temperature. It changes from month to month, year to year, and place to place. For example, when the Northwest was suffering for rain this summer, the Southeast was having more than its seasonal share. While the rainfall has been decreasing in the Northwest for a score of years, it has been increasing in the South from 1904 to 1929.

But when we begin to look into the matter of temperature, it does look as if Granddad was right. The records show that the winters of sixty and seventy years ago really were colder than they are today. Our winter temperatures have been growing warmer for more than fifty years with no sign of a change yet. The same is true of our springs and falls. These temperature changes have been noted in other countries in this hemisphere as well as in the southern hemisphere. And, strange as it seems, while our winter, spring, and fall seasons were growing warmer, our summers were growing cooler. Our summers have been cooling off since 1880. Just recently our summers have been warming up a bit. This past summer is one of the hottest in many parts of the country and if it is a guide, we may be starting on a stretch of fairly warm summers.

As for storms, the weather experts say we have nothing to indicate either an increase or a decrease in tornadoes or hurricanes or even just plain thunder storms. We only know that they are influenced by other unusual weather conditions.

The secret behind our weather is simply that it runs in long periods. It varies from day to day and year to year and for long periods of years. Some of these periods range from twenty and fifty to a hundred years, so most of us can't use our memories to learn what it is all about. Since the records show that our winter, spring and fall seasons are warmer than they were twenty-five or fifty years ago, it's hard to convince granddad that our climate isn't changing. But the records of fifty or a hundred years back indicate that the changes aren't permanent. The weather is just going through its regular course of long-period variations.

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